

**For Immediate Release:**  
October 04, 2018

**For more information contact:**  
Public Health Communications  
(213) 240-8144  
media@ph.lacounty.gov

## Public Health Reports Several Cases of Flea-Borne Typhus

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is investigating an outbreak involving several cases of flea-borne typhus in downtown Los Angeles and is working with the city of Los Angeles to implement environmental safety measures to reduce the spread of the disease.

Flea-borne typhus is a disease that infected fleas can spread to humans. Bacteria (*Rickettsia typhi* and *R. felis*) found in infected fleas, and their feces, cause typhus. Fleas can come from many types of animals including cats, rats, and opossums. Although pets and animals do not get sick from typhus, typhus can cause high fever, chills, headache, and rash in people and can be treated with antibiotics. Places where there is an accumulation of trash that attract wild animals like feral cats, rats and opossums that may carry an infected flea may increase the risk of exposure. Typhus is not transmitted person-by-person.

“Although typhus normally occurs throughout LA County, we are observing several cases in the downtown Los Angeles area,” said Muntu Davis, MD, MPH, Los Angeles County Health Officer. “We encourage pet owners to practice safe flea control and encourage all cities in the county to ensure maintenance of their trash clean-up and rodent control activities.”

To help prevent typhus:

- Practice safe flea control
- Use flea control products on your pets.
- When outside, wear pants tucked into socks or boots. Spray insect repellent with DEET on socks and pant cuffs.
- Avoid being near wild or stray animals
- Never feed or touch wild animals, especially opossums, rats, stray, or feral cats.
- Store your trash in cans with secure lids to avoid attracting animals.
- Get rid of places where rats and stray animals sleep, hide, or find food, like crawl spaces, attics, or under decks. Protect yourself by wearing gloves and a mask when cleaning these areas. Wash your hands when you're finished.

Public Health is partnering with the City of Los Angeles and community partners to continue surveillance activities, to interview and treat those affected and to reduce the environmental risk for this disease. For rodent complaints in the City of Los Angeles, call 3-1-1. For other cities, call LA County 2-1-1.

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>

For more information regarding flea-borne typhus, visit: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorTyphus.htm> or call LA County 2-1-1.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of over 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health comprises nearly 4,100 employees and has an annual budget of \$1 billion. To learn more about Los Angeles County Public Health, please visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov), and follow LA County Public Health on social media at [twitter.com/lapublichealth](https://twitter.com/lapublichealth), [facebook.com/lapublichealth](https://facebook.com/lapublichealth) and [youtube.com/lapublichealth](https://youtube.com/lapublichealth).